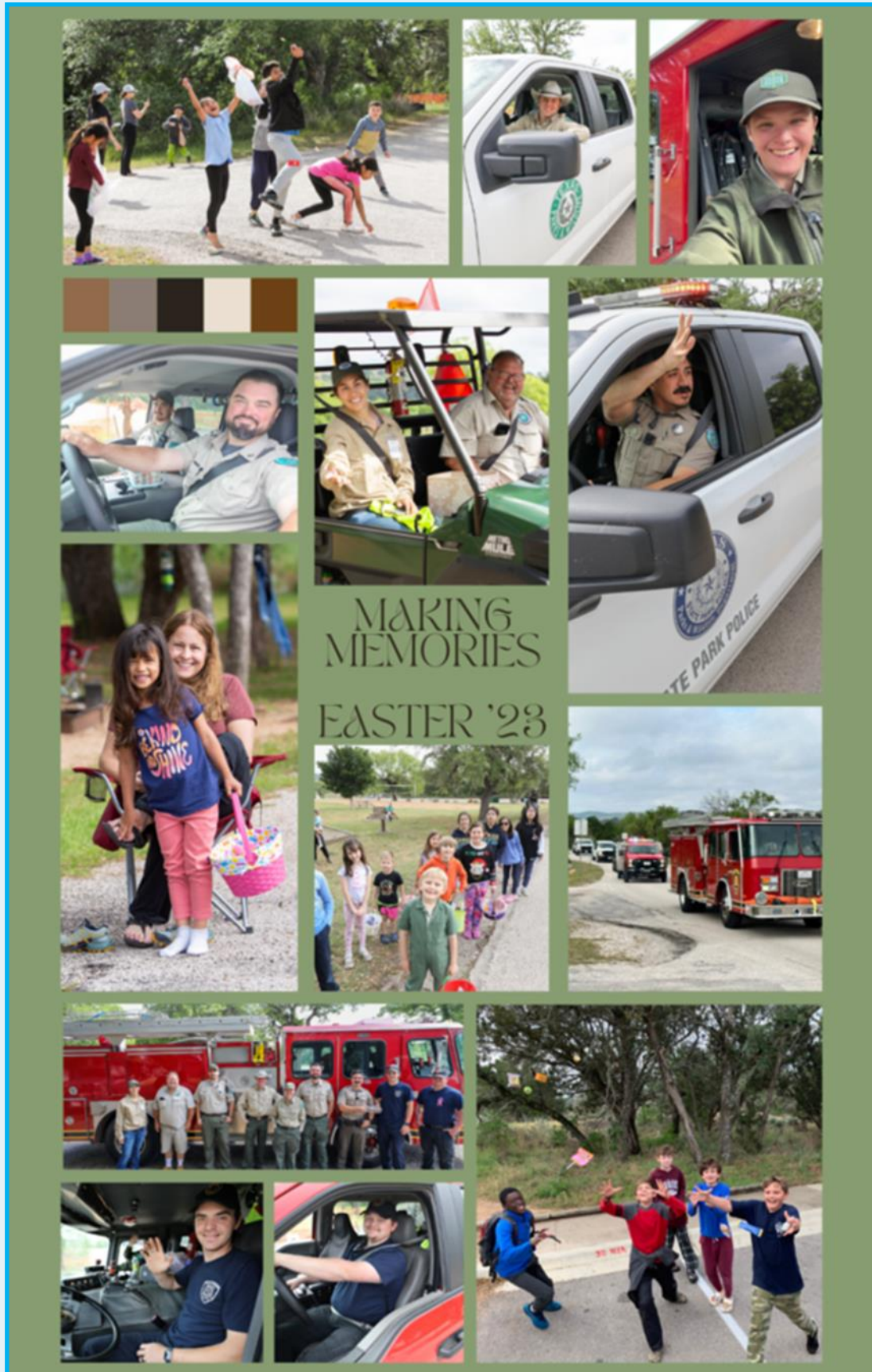


# The Steward

Summer 2023 Highland Lakes Master Naturalists Volume 14 Issue 2



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Please submit pictures, articles, reports, stories, announcements, etc. to:  
[becky\\_breazeale@yahoo.com](mailto:becky_breazeale@yahoo.com)

**Thank y'all for ALL!!**

## Message from our President

By Roy Appleton

A brave band of brainstormers has begun exploring the HLMN land of opportunities.

A focus of the group is communication, as in how to best present volunteering opportunities to chapter members.

And how to best connect the chapter with the public.

Expanding those connections would create opportunities. Perhaps with a speaker's bureau, videos of volunteer activities and a podcast featuring chapter members. Just a few ideas, possibilities.

The HLMN website and social media offer opportunities to help spread the words of who we are and what we do. These settings could include listings of chapter events/activities, features on volunteer projects and LMAP information. More ideas, possibilities.

The Brainstormers' interests also include chapter resources – from their creation and management to communication. Resources can mean teaching trunks, which will be the AT focus of our August meeting. Resources can be information for volunteer service, such as hikes and talks. Resources can include training class handouts and plant identification aids. Our website can play a major role in sharing such information with the chapter and perhaps the public. And our webmaster Becky Breazeale can get any help she needs. Thanks for all you do, Becky.

Our 20-year-old chapter covers four counties and includes four lakes, four rivers and five state parks. Question: Do we have a sufficient range of projects to attract a breadth of volunteers, particularly those new to the fun.

We seek a diversity of native plants. How about a diversity of new opportunities at and beyond Inks, the Hatchery, Bamberger and Blanco State Park, our foundation sites? A Highland Lakes seed bank? Citizen science work? Research assistance? A return of the chapter's invasives warriors? What else? Here's another opportunity: Revive the chapter's New Projects Committee (Section 5.2.4 in your handy chapter handbook).

For now, the Brainstormers are Paula Richards, Mary Ann Holt, Jill Goff and yours truly (all members of the HLMN board) and Peggy Schatz, a member of this year's training class. Two others from the class have expressed interest in joining us. We welcome you, too. Your ideas and participation. Contact any of the group to get involved. The Brainstormers are moving into action, targeting the chapter's internal and external communications. But the agenda and discussions aren't limited, and who knows where this interest will lead. Contact any of the group to get involved or ask questions or even pooh-pooh all this talk.

Some important questions: Is the chapter satisfied with the status quo? How much member interest, energy and expertise do we have to make and maintain changes? Why not just stay the course with this volunteer organization?

The Brainstormers' main goal is to serve chapter members and enlarge HLMN's outreach -- with efficiency and effectiveness.

Change can be unsettling, but it's natural and often good.



Swallowtail on wild roses high in the mountains of Colorado. Gary Hampton

## Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery

**Can you give a little history/background of Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery? What is the mission/philosophy of the Friends of Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery?**

In 1937, Inks Dam was chosen as the site for a new fish hatchery by the Bureau of Fisheries of US Biological Survey. The property was conveyed to the LCRA in 1938 for use as a fish hatchery. Two months later the National Youth Administration provided labor building fish ponds and other structures, eventually providing trade and vocational courses to young men and women. In 1940, 350 youths were at the site. In 1942, the NYA was transferred to the War Manpower Commission and work centered on providing courses designed to fill shortage of workers vital to the Texas war industries. In 1943, the NYA camp was closed and land returned to the LCRA. The site continued use as a vocational training camp until 1951. The site was developed into a LCRA Recreation camp by employee volunteers, until being abandoned after a few years. Without continued maintenance, buildings were demolished for safety and all that remains are foundations, rocks walls and stone building fronts. The Hatchery's main function continues to provide channel catfish to the Tribal Nations mainly in Arizona and Mexico. Scientific research into native freshwater mussels is also a major activity of Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery.\*

The Friends of Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery supports: the Hatchery's creation and stewardship of quality wildlife habitat; the Hatchery's environmental, educational and scientific projects; projects and programs to increase the public's understanding and enjoyment of the Hatchery and the mission of the US Fish and Wildlife Service.



Courtesy photo was taken in 1953 when this part of the hatchery was being used as a LCRA Recreation Camp. The building was the NYA camp administration building which today is the site of the pollinator garden.

#### **Where is IDNFH located?**

345 Clay Young Rd. (off Park Rd. 4), Burnet, Texas

#### **What are some volunteer activities at the Hatchery that our members can pursue and how do members learn about these opportunities?**

IDNFH has several public fish events throughout the year that HLMN members staff. The Friends also sponsor a Hatchery Outdoor Program, Archery, Outreach Programs, a Birdblind, and a Pollinator Garden. HLMN members can check the calendar activities for opportunities.

#### **What is your favorite volunteer opportunity at the Hatchery?**

My favorite Hatchery volunteer activity is the Pollinator Garden project—seeing the increasing amount of native pollinators as we have increased the diversity of native plants is a win-win—this amazing display happens 24, 7. We continue to expand our efforts with signage for self guided tours as well as outreach programs.

**\*Historical references from LCRA files & local old news articles compiled by Jerry Stacy**

## GOP - Great Outdoor Program at Inks Lake State Park

Just want to say a great big THANK YOU to all of our 2023 GOP volunteers!!

I may have put in a lot of the prep work and scheduling and organizing of the schools and volunteers, but it would have all been for naught without all of YOUR work before and during the event!!

I only wish I could have left my station to see you all in action. Special thanks to those of you that worked EVERYDAY!! Also, thanks and welcome aboard to the 12 new class members that joined us as well as 4 others who were new to GOP. Hope you enjoyed it and will join us again next year. Also want to thank the staff at Inks Lake State Park for all their support!!! Couldn't have done it without their support too.

We had 61 folks who initially volunteered for GOP. Due to illness 2 couldn't actually make it but we appreciate your good intentions.

We had an average of about 35 volunteers each day with a whopping 46 on 4/5 which was also our meeting day.

In total we had 8 schools:

Marble Falls Elem, Spicewood Elem, Packsaddle Elem (Kingsland), Shady Grove Elem (Burnet), Bertram Elem, The Kingsland School, Faith Academy, and The Smoking for Jesus School with:  
497 students  
39 teachers  
189 others which included parents, siblings, or others that came along.

Sadly, we had a rain out on the day that Highland Lakes Elementary was supposed to attend. But despite that day, GOP 2023 was a TOTAL SUCCESS!!

Again, MANY THANKS!

*Cathy Hill*



Photo by Tom and Jean Schar



Left and below.  
Photos by  
Tom and Jean Schar



Left photo by Krista Paul



Photos by Krista Paul





Photos by Karen Stewart





Photos by Karen Stewart



Luna the Snake -  
Photo by Karen Stewart  
(left)



Photo by Karyn Parker  
(right and below)





Left Photo by Karen Stewart  
Below Photo by Karyn Parker



## Hatchery Outdoor Program at Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery

Great day for HOP—a little sprinkle started on set up, but clouds disappeared by 9 a.m. when the buses arrived, just like Camelot! Many thanks to our FOIDFH volunteer family, including HLMN new class members Ed & Catherine Houston, who doubled up on HOP & graduation today. Appreciate Greg Cockrill organizing HOP, IDNFH staff and hosts—our volunteers provide a depth of knowledge & expertise putting our outreach experience as a special event for these students.

Thanks all.

Linda O’Nan,  
President,  
Friends of Inks Dam National Fish Hatchery



Photos by Linda O’Nan



Photos by Linda O’Nan



Photos by Suzanne Adkinson

# Texas Venomous Snakes

Our great state of Texas is home to over 105 species and subspecies of snakes, according to the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department. Four of those species are venomous: Rattlers, Cottonmouths, Copperheads, and Corals. "Despite this, each year, there have been more deaths in Texas attributed to lightning strikes than to venomous snakebites." (TPWD) Snakes serve a vital role in control of insects and rodents in our ecology. For instance, a nonvenomous rat snake is a farmer's or rancher's friend. Knowledge and respect for the species of snake you may encounter will determine who is friend or foe.

Be aware of your surroundings. Rattlers, Copperheads, and Cottonmouths (aka Water Moccasins) can blend into a scene with their camouflage or non-vibrant coloring as opposed to the brightly colored red, yellow, black Coral. Several guidelines to follow to avoid a snakebite are as follows. First, never place your hand into a hole or a space in which you can't see the bottom. Secondly, if you are going to move a log or a large rock, roll the item towards you so that if there is a snake underneath their exit is away from you. Or if you are going to be stepping over the log or large rock kick it or bang it with a stick to make a noise. The vibrations will alert and scare the snake before your foot sets onto the ground. Next, keep the grass around your home mowed so that if there is a snake you can walk around them. Also, remove brush or debris piles that are close to your home or where children and pets play. Brush piles create a dark cool space for snakes to shelter. The piles are also where they will hunt for rodents. Lastly, be wary of where you step along creek banks. Dr. Maureen Frank, Texas A&M Extension Wildlife Specialist said, "The best ways to avoid snake bites is to watch where you step or reach and to keep your distance if you see one."

Rattlers' habitats vary from deserts, grasslands, and rocky areas seeking cool shade during our hot summers. Cottonmouths aka Water Moccasins prefer to be close to water whether ponds, rivers, or lakes. Copperheads can be found in most types of habitats. They prefer near streams and places with vegetation and debris. Coral snakes, the most potent of the venomous four, are shy and non-aggressive unless provoked. Coral snakes can be found in the woodlands or rock cropping. Our Highland Lakes Area provides ample habitats for the four venomous snakes of Texas.

Several myths and facts exist in half-truths regarding these four species. For instance, you can determine whether a water snake is harmless or venomous by the way they swim. Generally, this is true. A Water Moccasin swims with its body above the water and its head held high. While a Plain-bellied water snake will swim with its heavy body below the waterline and its head skimming the surface. However, Water Moccasins also hunt underwater and can swim for up to an hour underwater without coming up for air. Another half truth is that Rattlers will always rattle their tails when approached. Sometimes they don't for many reasons. For instance, if they have just eaten. They are satiated and lethargic. Or if the snake has been living in a high traffic area it has learned not to react to every noise or vibration. Often, they will choose to simply slither away undetected. Be aware of your surroundings.

Solid facts:

- ❖ If you hear a rattle, stop in your tracks. Determine the location of the source and slowly back away.
- ❖ Coral snakes can be differentiated from the harmless milk snake by the order of the color rings on their body. The rhyme "Red touches yellow, kills a fellow." Or you can use a stop light to remember. Yellow caution, slow down. Red to stop. Don't touch.

- ❖ If you are bit, seek immediate medical attention. Do not wait for symptoms (25% of bites are dry bites but you don't want to take a chance, do you?) If you were able to see the snake that bit you or even take a photo, let the medical professional treating you know. This will streamline your antivenin treatment and expedite your recovery.
- ❖ Rattlers, Cottonmouths, and Copperheads are vipers. Coral snake is of the cobra family.
- ❖ "All snakes in the cobra family have fixed, hollow fangs. In contrast, pit vipers (rattlesnakes, copperheads, and cottonmouths) have fangs that are hollow but can rotate forward to deliver a bite. Nonvenomous snakes lack specialized teeth, and all snakes have small rear-facing teeth to help the snake grasp and consume prey." (Dr. Maureen Frank)

In conclusion, Burnet County Agent Kelly Tarla states, "The main thing I would like to stress about the venomous snakes is to learn how to identify them. There are many sayings and myths out there about snakes, so I would encourage all to learn their identifying characteristics and not just believe the myths."

Below are some resources to help you get started.

<https://tpwd.texas.gov/s?q=snakes>

<https://wildlife.tamu.edu/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/centexsnakes>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/norcentexSID>

P.S. In creating a sanctuary for our avian friends I had also inadvertently created a perfect habitat for a rattler. I had left the Ash tree trimmings on the ground in the backyard, not 5' from one of my bird feeder stands. I water in the mornings from 4:45 –5:30 from my rain barrels. Hence I had created a wonderful habitat for the rattler. The photo below was taken in my backyard. I walked out like I do every morning, barefoot and in shorts to fill my bird feeders. Right before this photo was taken aka when I came across the rattler, his mouth was open with a bird foot sticking out. If his mouth had not been open, I am not completely confident I would have seen him.

~Martelle Luedecke





## SOUTH TEXAS BIRDING TRIP, APRIL 2023

By Sherry Bixler

With lots of help from the Trip Committee and Fred and Kay Zagst, the birding trip got rave reviews. Despite severe weather on the first day and several unexpected snags, we saw a wonderful array of colorful and interesting birds. We missed out on Laguna Atascosa on the way to South Padre Island due to weather but met with our guide the next day for an all day tour of the island. Warblers, grosbeaks, orioles, tanagers, buntings and other migrants splashed color everywhere and we also spent time on the shore watching sandpipers, herons, gulls, terns and pelicans.

The following day we trekked to the McAllen area where most of the group stayed at the Alamo Inn with our favorite innkeeper, Keith Hackland. Keith furnished us with a huge assortment of foods, for breakfast, packed lunches and snacks.

Our first stop that day was Estero Llano Grande with its ponds, trails and forested areas. Watching out for alligators, we found Green Jays, waterfowl, waders, hummingbirds and even a Pauraque nest with two eggs. After lunch on the patio at Nana's, we drove to Santa Ana NWR and walked the short trail with several blinds overlooking the marsh. Some stayed to hike further while some escaped the heat for an early dinner.

After dinner many of the group drove into McAllen to watch the Green Parakeets come in to roost. The flock recently numbered a thousand birds but seemed to have split as we saw about 150 birds but heard them in other locations. There are only about 1200 Green Parakeets in the United States and only one other native parrot, the Red-Crowned Parrot.

On Day 4 we arrived at Bentsen-Rio Grande early and walked down the main road noting chachalacas, raptors, migrants, south Texas endemics and early breeding species. We had a picnic lunch at the pavilion at the National Butterfly Center and a guided tour of the Center with its native pollinator plants, trails and bird blind. Our last stop of the day was the beautiful Quinta Mazatlán estate, the largest historic adobe house in Texas. Birds were plentiful and large trees provided much needed shade. We stayed until closing time before meeting at a local restaurant for our group dinner.

On day 5 we met at the Edinburgh Wetlands for our last birding outing before traveling home. The Wetlands had its usual assortment of waterfowl including lots of lovely amber colored Fulvous Whistling Ducks to round out our bird list. There were also Least Grebes, thrushes, thrashers, night herons and migrants although we had only a brief glimpse of a Green Kingfisher and no other Kingfishers at all.

The trip was truly enjoyable for me because of the great attitudes of our group who dealt with rain, tornados, heat and early starts with ease.

Thank you to all who came.

**Sherry Bixler**



Photos by Karyn Parker



## Free Family Fishing Day at

Awesome day at the Hatchery—record busting attendance for Free Fish Day @363 attendees. Our wonderful FOIDFH & HLMN volunteers, IDNFH staff & hosts, Jeff Conway, project supt. all made this a memorable day. Many thanks to George Brugnoli, event coordinator, for all the hours of organizing—made this mammoth undertaking go relatively smooth. Great teamwork & lots of thanks from participants

Photos by Ingrid Hoffmeister





Photos by Ingrid Hoffmeister





Photos by Phil Wyde





Free Fishing Day photo by Phil Wyde



Pride of Barbados-Caesalpinia pulcherrima Photo by Louise Suhey



Western Diamondback Rattler Photo by Martelle Luedecke



Common Whitetail-*Plathemis lydia*  
Photo by Louis Suhey



White-lined Sphinx- *Hyles lineata*  
Photo by Louise Suhey

## Green Thumb Day at the Hatchery

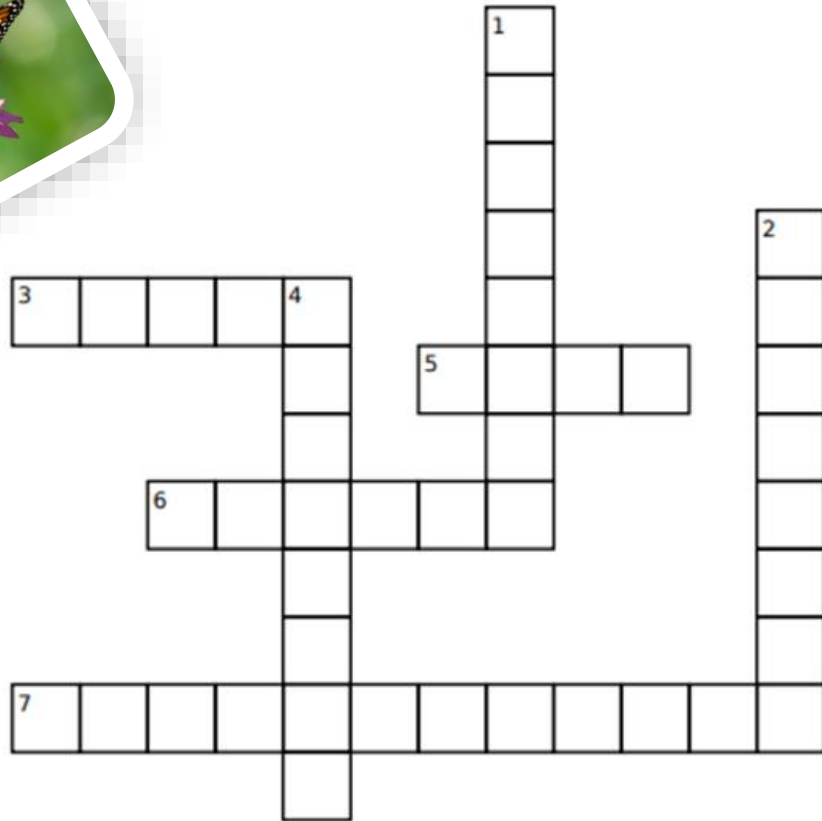
Photos by Linda O’Nan







# Wing it with Butterflies



**Down:**

- 1. yellow or orange, perch with wings closed
- 2. brown with large colorful eyespots
- 4. most have broad white bands across wings

**Across:**

- 3. eating machine
- 5. chrysalis
- 6. most abundant and conspicuous
- 7. large butterfly with tails on hindwings





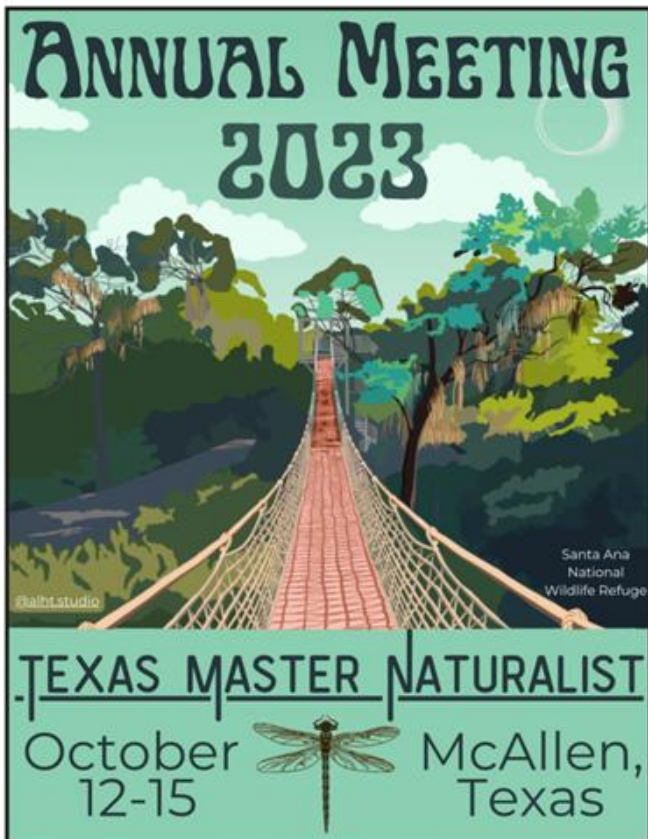
**Left:**

**Great Horned Owl being rehabilitated by Ed Sones. Shown at Bamberger Preserve Open House Gary Hampton**

**Bottom left and bottom right:**

**MARK your Calendars for the Texas Master Naturalist Annual Meeting 2023.**

**#TMT Tuesdays count as AT!**



**2023**  
**#TMT Tuesdays**

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January 10	May 9	September 12
February 14	June 13	October 3* <small>*first week of month</small>
March 14	July 11	November 14
April 11	August 8	December 12

T E X A S

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MISSION



The Texas Master Naturalist program is a natural resource-based volunteer training and development program sponsored statewide by Texas A&M AgriLife Extension and the Texas Parks and Wildlife Department.



The mission of the program is to develop a corps of well-informed volunteers who provide education, outreach, and service dedicated to the beneficial management of natural resources and natural areas within their communities for the state of Texas

Officers:

- President:** Roy Appleton III (214) 208-3624 cell
- V.P.** Jill Goff (817) 773-7711 cell
- Secretary** Bill Edwards (210) 274-4496 cell
- Treasurer** Lynn Davis (830) 385-1115 cell



I Am Going to Miss All of You!" Phil Wyde